



## THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

WASHINGTON

APR 24 2002

## Memorandum

To: Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs  
 Director, Bureau of Land Management  
 Director, National Park Service  
 Director, Fish and Wildlife Service  
 Director, Office of Wildland Fire Coordination

From: Secretary *Julia A. Norton*

Subject: Completing Fuels Treatment Projects and Increasing Outside Contracting

The dangerous fire conditions that exist near many wildland urban interface communities require that effective use be made of every fuels treatment dollar Congress has appropriated. I am writing to encourage all those responsible for the fuels treatment program to make it a priority, consistent with all applicable safety and environmental regulations, to complete fuels treatment projects. We should also be working to follow clear Congressional intent<sup>1/</sup> that the Departmental funds for the fuels treatment and burned area stabilization and rehabilitation program should be expended wherever possible through contracts and assistance to small, local entities. The Department of the Interior awarded approximately \$48 million (including BIA's P.L. 93-638 awards to Tribes) for these programs in Fiscal Year 2001. This is 16% of the \$300 million available for fuels treatment and burned area rehabilitation. This percentage indicates that more can and should be done to meet Congressional directives to increase the level of outside contracting.

A recent National Fire Plan Acquisition and Assistance Management Review demonstrated a great variance in fuels treatment contracting performance between NFP Bureaus/Services and across regions of the country. This points to the need for improvement in both the amount of contracting and more coordination among our agencies. Therefore, I request your involvement in ensuring that all Interior fire program managers and supporting procurement and assistance managers and resource specialists renew and increase efforts to plan, schedule, award, and effectively administer contract and assistance projects in support of the NFP.

Accordingly, I direct the following actions:

- Agencies are to establish FY 2001 benchmarks and aggressive FY 2002 goals for increasing NFP procurement and assistance awards, as follows:
  - Percent of hazardous fuels treatment projects done by contract versus in-house;

<sup>1/</sup> "In conducting treatments, local contract personnel are to be used whenever possible."  
 FY01 Appropriations Act Conference Report, p. 117.

- Actual number and dollar value of NFP fuels treatment contracts or orders;
  - Percent of emergency stabilization and rehabilitation projects done by contract versus in-house;
  - Actual number and dollar value of NFP emergency stabilization and rehabilitation contracts or orders.
- These benchmarks and goals are to be established and communicated to the Director, Office of Wildland Fire Coordination (OWFC), by April 15, 2002 (see attached format).
  - NFP funds are "no-year" funds and should be treated as such. Work on a fuels project should not be interrupted because the fiscal year has ended. When the project planning and contracting process do not permit an award in time for performance in the current year, Contracting Officers have the authority to award the contract for performance in the next fiscal year.
  - Both Congressional and Executive Branch intent to contract out hazardous fuels treatment and emergency stabilization and rehabilitation work must be made clear to all levels of wildland fire management, resource management, and procurement officials. We must contract for a major portion of the hazardous fuels treatment and emergency stabilization and rehabilitation work rather than performing this work in-house. Continued in-house performance of all or nearly all of such work by regional and field managers does not fully comply with Congressional and Departmental intent. Key data will be collected and progress monitored through the Interior Procurement Data System to measure compliance with contracting goals.
  - In areas where we need to build local capabilities to perform hazardous fuels treatment work, we must award grants and cooperative agreements to the maximum extent practicable. Key data will be collected and progress in meeting goals will be monitored through the Federal Assistance Award Data System.
  - Resource managers and fuels treatment specialists must develop hazardous fuels treatment projects, particularly mechanical treatments, in a manner that facilitates contracting, including early involvement of procurement managers in the process. Procurement managers must be given preliminary project information, including time lines, early in the project management cycle to effectively plan support of contract requirements.
  - Resource and fuels treatment specialists must look to new categories of work for contracting out, including but not limited to, National Environmental Policy Act assessments, baseline environmental studies, fire effects studies, post-treatment monitoring and other areas necessary to increase contracting in the fuels treatment program.

- Procurement and assistance managers and specialists are to rely to the maximum extent practicable on contracting tools that reduce procurement and assistance lead times associated with preparing original solicitations and awards. These tools include the model contracts and agreements available on the NFP web site, inter-agency contracts, and other existing procurement vehicles, particularly including Indefinite Delivery - Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) and other types of renewable contracts.
- Procurement managers and specialists who expect or experience any problem with identifying qualified local, small contractors and other entities to support NFP projects must work early in the process with bureau Business Utilization and Development specialists and other resources, including Small Business Administration representatives, local chambers of commerce, trade associations and others to find and qualify these entities.
- Contracting Officers must expedite NFP contract and purchase awards to small, local vendors throughout the remainder of FY 2002, taking appropriate advantage of the appropriations language "Notwithstanding federal government procurement and contracting laws ..." to obtain the maximum competition that is practicable from small, local vendors, or to vendors that commit to hire 51 percent or more local staff or small local subcontractors. This FY 2002 appropriations language should be cited as the exception to "full and open" competition.
- Accomplishments toward these goals are to be documented and reported to OWFC by October 30, 2002. FY 2003 goals must also be established and submitted to OWFC at that time.

I am confident that line managers, resource and fuels managers and their supporting procurement and assistance managers can and will work together to plan, award and effectively administer contracts, grants and cooperative agreements in keeping with Congressional intent and the above directions. Thank you for your continuing commitment to effective implementation of the National Fire Plan.

#### Attachment

cc: Secretary of Agriculture  
 Chief, USDA Forest Service  
 Director, USDA Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management  
 Director, DOI Office of Acquisition and Property Management  
 Director, DOI Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization  
 DOI Bureau Fire Directors, BLM, BIA, NPS, FWS  
 DOI Bureau Procurement Chiefs, BLM, BIA, NPS, FWS  
 Director, USDA Forest Service Acquisition Management Staff  
 Director, DOI Office of Budget  
 Director, USDA Forest Service Program Budget and Analysis

**National Fire Plan**  
**Fuels Treatment and Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation**  
**FY 2001 Accomplishments / FY 2002 Goals Recommended Reporting Format**

Bureau: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Responsible Official: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Responsible Official: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

| Activity   | FY 2001 Accomplishments | FY 2002 Goals         |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Percent of NFP fuels treatment projects done by contract versus in-house.                             |                         |                       |
| 2. Actual number and dollar value of NFP fuels treatment contracts or orders.                            | No. _____<br>\$ _____   | No. _____<br>\$ _____ |
| 3. Percent of NFP emergency stabilization and rehabilitation projects done by contract versus in-house.  |                         |                       |
| 4. Actual number and dollar value of NFP emergency stabilization and rehabilitation contracts or orders. | No. _____<br>\$ _____   | No. _____<br>\$ _____ |
| 5. Number and dollar value of NFP assistance agreements.   | No. _____<br>\$ _____   | No. _____<br>\$ _____ |
| 6. Number of additional contracting Officers' Representatives trained.                                   |                         |                       |